

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF NUISANCES

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TEN YEARS OF HISTORY

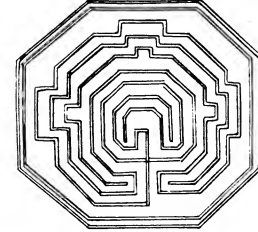
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TEN YEARS OF HISTORY

sketch for an historical outline

on the advancement
of social alienation



When we think about these last ten years, the form they have given to the spirit of the times, the thread they have woven in which the figures of unconsciousness have been embroidered, powerlessness comes to mind first of all, then unease. The powerlessness of individuals, whose entire life is more than ever subjected to the raving needs of the system of present day production, is only made more evident through their pitiable self justifying twaddle, false cynicism, or euphoric pretence. Then there is the unease that seizes those people when they see - and they see it practically constantly - that the compensation they think they have found at the cost of their renunciation is, like their poor material satisfactions, extremely tenuous. Everywhere they are poisoned by the reality of alienated work which is at their source. And their proliferation has merely laid bare poverty and noxiousness.

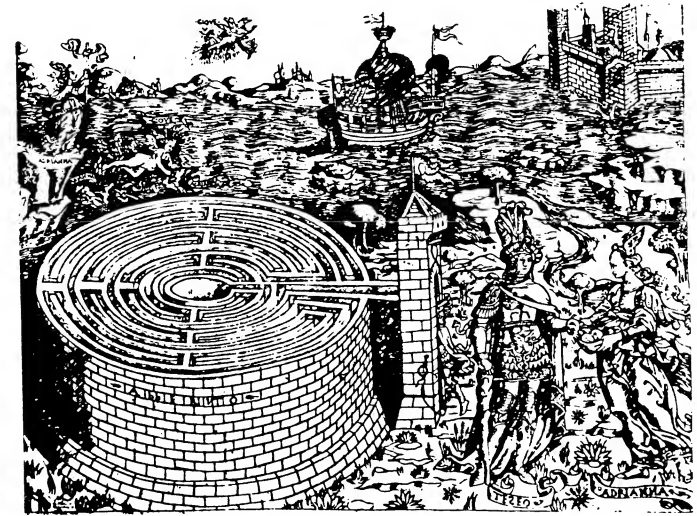
Despite this objective decomposition of the material basis of illusion, the unease which gnaws at the immense majority of our contemporaries in no way propels them to revolt - even given the false riches which make up the real "new poor". They are rather, to invert the official lie which describes them as

such, the same poor as always - employees of a system having access to its false riches. It seems however, on the contrary, to make them cling even more desperately to the synthetic reality distributed by commodity production. They are like the neurotic that clings to the symptoms of their illness - substitute gratification for something that never happened. Very generally, over the last ten years one has witnessed the strengthening of the links which bind people to their unhappiness, not one of which ever had been broken but were momentarily relaxed. At the same time this sickness, the historical sickness of social alienation, has become universal, to the point where nothing has been saved of what once, with its limited satisfaction, constituted immediate life.

In no way has this world become more agreeable but it has succeeded in restoring the idea that it is the only one possible. To break the complicity of people with what's killing them and their preference for something that harms them, there must exist and be seen to exist, a practical alternative which gives to each and everyone, the possibility of an increase in force and directly experienced richness. The fear of

freedom is only a supra historic fatality. It is determined by a precise situation where what could be made free by breaking with the neurotic addiction to the mechanisms of sickness, does not have any direct means of expression. Lacking a collective project crystallizing the desires of the epoch, it turns against the subject as madness, separating the subject from others. Dialectical thought is beyond this madness but in order to break through this dark turning point - "the dusk of contradiction" consciousness must know itself and be recognised in communication with other consciousness. Dialectical

reason is first of all unreason in relation to the dominant reason. It is only by unmasking the partial character of the latter and by formulating exactly, with a view to given conditions, the project of its overcoming, that it becomes fully fledged reason. The victory of the old order precisely consists in preventing that from happening. It thrusts back critical thought into the one sidedness of pure denunciation or arbitrary interpretation, thus contaminating it with its own irreality. Positivity without history and a negativity without a project find themselves, face to face, like two mirrors which separates and fills them.





We shall be considering the deterioration of the subjective conditions of revolution and the advance of alienation it has permitted, by centering our analysis on some decisive moments of this process in Europe. It is there that this society is most in gear with the most advanced critical point of view. It is there, through the conflict of city states, then of modern class society, that the thought of history and the project which it inherits, is born. This project consists of totally appropriating history, subjecting all existing conditions to the power of united individuals. Equally it is in Europe that the victory of the dominant society takes each time the most characteristic forms of counter revolution - bonapartism, social democracy, fascism, stalinism, state terrorism. The industries which supply the most modern forms of alienation can just as well be found in California or Japan but their might is gauged in and through Europe. It is there that the most modern forms of contestation have always had their being and which it becomes a question of neutralizing and recuperating. The restoration of alienation can follow no other route than attempts at disalienation.



In the May movement, the social critique of modern capitalism's new conditions had joined, thanks to the coherent practise of those who were their bearers, the subverting of these conditions to the autonomous action of the proletariat. But these complimentary aspects were not unified lastingly. They had been present at

So it was in the 60's from the European terrain of memory - the memory of a proletarian project of a classless society and the memory of a project of individual emancipation formulated by modern art - that the development of modern alienation had been understood and combatted. It did not take place in that outskirts of thought, the American metropolis of commodity spectacle. It is true that some partial critical formulations produced in the United States after the Second World war were the result of a revolutionary marxism from the 20's, faced with exile and the reality of the most advanced class society. Displaced and cut off from the living environment they did not withstand university recuperation. A critical theory of society can only exist and develop its truth by calculating exactly its social use. It must combat its integration and falsification by the dominant culture in order to be there with all its integrity, when the real movement of practical critique has the need and use of it. With the exception of the Situationist International, no one during these years has known how to do it.

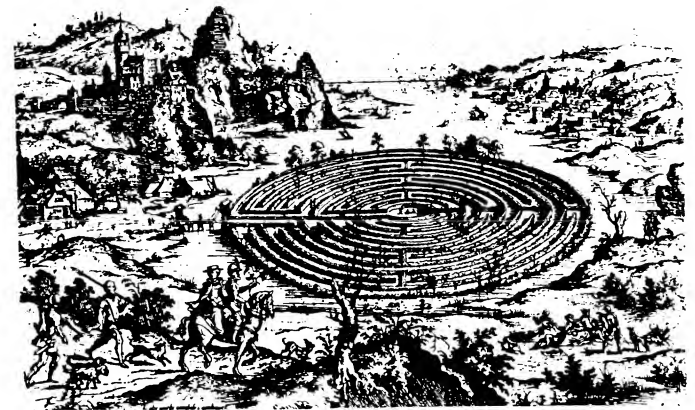
one and the same time, linked by the communication existing between acts which gave birth to the revolutionary moment. However they were still too separated - the trade union bureaucracies had in the main managed to isolate the workers in the factories. What was then at stake and marked an epoch, was the realization what was held in abey-

ance in the month of may, was the appropriation by the real movement of "its own unknown theory".

The May revolution constituted for the world proletariat a new point of departure of historic, universal importance. Its defeat was not for one moment enough to restore the old order - this one had still to succeed in overcoming what had begun then. One can point out fairly easily that it has achieved results worthy of note in this direction. But it is only of interest if we are concerned with understanding how, contrary to all the regular ex-leftists who have unconditionally rallied to the objectivity of the existing world and want to see in their former wayward critiques only a youthful error and subjective illusion, it must be understood from the point of view of the process itself, what occasions have been lost and why certain conditions have prevailed at the expense of others it would have been better to defend and more able to attempt. Anyone considering the history of these years with an unprejudiced eye will, first of all observe, that the members of the ruling class

have managed to reverse the tendency of their rate of control over society to decline. And it's essential to see that the visible decomposition of society is not contradicted by the reinforcement of control by the state and the commodity. They express them. When what matters is the destruction of everything which still exists independently of the mediation of the spectacle and the State, it would have been out of character for the State and the commodity to have lent a hand.

During these years in which the proprietary classes have reorganized their domination, one can see, however, little one can bear to look on clinically that they have not slept on or toyed with. But before considering what they have done and how they have regained the initiative, it is necessary to consider what their enemies have not done and how they allowed them to regain the initiative. Above all else, this is basically the determinant factor and it is also the place we can best understand because we have known it well enough. It remains to us to say yet again, the truth of power is down to us.





Over the years following the May revolution, it seemed to many. that the sentence pronounced against the existing social organization only remained to be executed. As a matter of fact the question of means was hardly brought up. It went without saying that an unbridled autonomy and total liberty would take care of everything. This world was finished. The only reason it had been able to last was because it existed. And this reason appeared feeble compared with all those that announced the contrary. The revolt born of a dissatisfaction with life in its entirety had become generalized. All the dominant conditions of existence were like unreal intrusions. The managers themselves spoke only of changing them as quickly as possible.

However in confrontations of this nature, the forces measure themselves with a relative magnitude and not from the point of view of absolute knowledge which knows very well how to talk of decadence while leafing through the pages of a historical dictionary. One can always ironize on managers' defects but they are still sustained through these defects. They retain their power and that's all that really matters to them. This feeble argument for prolonging the systems existence, was finally powerful enough because it must be admitted that arguments which have been counterposed to the system, have turned out to be even weaker.

In France, the current of social critique which had developed from the lived refusal of May, was unable to organize itself to lastingly demolish the spectacular monopoly of explanation. True the theory of such an organization was as new as the revolutionary conditions which made it necessary. It was easy enough to know what one could no longer serve (parties, unions, militantism). However this refusal of intermediaries rendered the intelligence of necessary mediations all the more vital. Those who had found in May a direct

application of their revolt, in its convergence with the first wildcat general strike in history, had now to learn, what they had neither the time nor the need to learn previously. They had to martial their forces, pinpoint their application - in short to think strategically. The majority did not succeed in doing this. Many not only lost the thread of an historical intelligence but lost themselves in several varieties of resignation. Putting into practise beyond mere existence, what had been immediately felt - somewhat disarmingly - as a total desire to subvert, rather than something to be properly understood in all its determinants was, to be sure, an immense task. But the program of a modern revolution formulating the project of a total historical presence of individuals, could not be defended through abstention whilst everywhere so many people were attempting to intervene against conditions that had been laid down for them.

Beyond doubt, the main weakness of the post May radical current cannot, with its boundaries and specific task, be put down to not knowing itself. By abstractly indentifying with the "proletariat", it at once lost in this indeterminate radicality of the night of the totality, the intelligence of what it had done and what it could do and what the workers were doing and were able to do in their struggle against their self-serving representation. Real difficulties conveniently disappeared and this activity was still, in all its essentials, an avantgarde activity. At this moment, those people who found themselves in the most advanced revolutionary positions, left open to the several leftist fractions the terrain of single issue struggles which they everywhere led against particular aspects of alienation. These struggles doubtless spoke in a still mystified language. But to scorn them as "partial" as did the purists who withdrew proudly behind the shelter of totality, was

really to cast scorn on a living totality. The outcome is not a determinate one but a practical process - a struggle involving the particular characteristics of each contradiction as experienced - in order to arrive at general conclusions and the conditions of unity.

As to the State and the diverse forces of the counter revolution, they had, as is usual, no need to comprehend in every way, the historical reach of what they were doing. In their threatened situation they easily found at hand the material and content of their activity. Under the pressure of contestation, it was enough for them to conclude what they had begun during the euphoria of social peace. All their particular repressive tasks spontaneously came together in undertaking to subject the entirety of life to an economy developing for itself alone. So long as the oppressive coherence of the commodity is not, as universal social relation, brought into question, the ruse of commodity reason guarantees to its servants the intelligence adequate to them. They realize their interests and at the same time produce another thing which lies hidden there. This they do not take into account nor does it enter into their heads. Just look for example how the stalinists, the conscious enemies of the proletariat if ever there was one, have smashed strikes to clear the road to "industrial restructuring" - which suppresses the base - in order to hang onto their power.

Instead the social movement which has led the proletariat to combat its modernized misery and resume its lost history can only derive its coherence from its project. Its advance can only be a long and difficult one because placed before it is the need to understand itself and therefore to create from anything the practical means of just such an understanding. What returned as the order of the day were Workers councils - the autonomous organization of the proletariat. When the movement of the economy itself became ever more visibly the negation of

life, destroying the illusion of a canton mode of self-management adopted to existing production, the councils were redefined by the ensemble of their modern tasks. The radical current of the partisans of a modern social critique, propagated in the main by youth, defended of course the watchwords of the Councils. But powerless to make the content more definite through their own activity, combatting effectively from where they stood what a government of councils must definitively abolish (urbanism, culture, leisure activities etc), it became imbued with a growing unrealism. This was inverted sometimes comically into a vexed critique of workers' struggles they were all the more incapable of supporting or even understanding because they had magically denied what separated them from their struggles. In France this separation was reinforced with the power of trade union bureaucracies who are the guardians of it, by the fact that many young workers chose after 1968, to leave the factories on whose gates they had not long ago written "freedom stops here". So the movement which stopped in 1968 before the creation of autonomous organization reversing anti-union struggle into a positive project of total democracy, far from strengthening the memory of past proletarian endeavours was weakened to the point of forgetting what it had already done.

In Italy the process of struggles that were more and more openly anti-union in the "creeping May" were heading irresistibly towards an open confrontation. These had been interrupted by the police bombs in December 1969. And everywhere else in this Europe traversed in every direction by wildcat strikes, one saw the proletariat after its initial victory - its reappearance as the subject of history - fail to take its offensive any further. It had been able to provoke a crises in the existing system well enough but afterwards it had stopped as if it remained unconvinced by its capacity to reorganize the world according to its desires. And in these matters, it is sufficient for people to believe themselves incapable of carrying out such things for them not to do it at all effectively.



It was in Portugal more than anywhere else that this subjective weakness manifested itself clearly as an internal limit. The revolutionary crises that developed there from April 1974 to November 1975 saw a near disappearance of the State and repression was powerless. History offers few better examples of such duration. The extreme slowness of the revolutionary process is explained by the weakness of the forces present which saved them over such a period of time from the obligation to bring things to a conclusion. The duality of power only lasted so long because it never totally crystallized.

The universal content of the Portuguese revolution was first of all masked by the strangeness of its genesis which partly concealed its main protagonists. The workers were swept aside in the breach opened by the army allowing the truth to be disguised all the more easily from their allies in Europe, particularly in Spain. The power vacuum - (created by soldiers who previously had fought over-seas so that nothing changed in Portugal, chose to change Portugal so they no longer had to fight over-seas) - was aggravated by proletarian subversion. The revolutionary movement thus easily went much further in certain respects than its French and Italian predecessors. This entailed a critique of political parties, the necessity of direct democracy, rejection of assembly manipulation, contempt for the State, acts against the State and private property, appropriation of the means of communication by workers and lastly an anti-hierarchical movement in the army which made the repressive forces in the State unstable. But this equally readily explains how right upto the end, the weakness of a revolutionary movement owed less its success to its consciousness organized into a practical force than to the inconsistency of its enemies and the benevolent neutrality of the popular left fraction in the army which was henceforth the sole power in the country. And as one can, once and for all

see, on the 25th of November 1975 when the military left was finally eliminated by moderate officers, nothing is so weak or unstable as the renown of a power which is not backed up by force. The proletarian movement which had advanced so far, nearly disappeared from one day to the next, with out ever having envisaged a defensive struggle.

This conclusion was merely the last of a series of upheavals in which various projects to restore the State - within the army and to neutralize the proletariat, were launched. Finally the open mutiny of the parachutists furnished the basis of November the 24th - the legal pretext to unleash an operation, prepared over several months and in a state of readiness, for some weeks. With the aid of a military unit, which numerically didn't count for much but acting very decisively, the moderate wing of the MFA successively immobilized all the leftist or rebellious units. Their officers let themselves be arrested, proving by this legalism that their leftism, although armed, was only an anachronistic parody of Leninism. This defeat without a fight was equally a defeat for the revolutionary workers in so far as they had not known themselves how to free their movement from the tutelage of their incompetent protectors. With the same irrationalism, they went from an excess of confidence to an excess of dissaray. All abstract critiques of this weakness would obviously be derisory. However it is necessary to note that in ceasing to be an actor in history you are not sheltered from the blows: you still receive them but in a combat you haven't chosen.

Inspite of everything, the Portuguese revolution was a modern revolution - even given the archaism of the domination against which it had begun. Its actuality propelled the autonomous organization lacking which, the proletariat cannot begin to communicate its real needs. This autonomous intervention meant that the main struggle did not unfurl between the conservation of

the past and its revolutionary change but between two general concepts of change. The first is positive and efficacious because it is the masters of the society which employs them daily to construct with means ceaselessly accrued, the decor and the conditions of life necessary to the development of the economy and the State. The other is spontaneous, hesitant, negative, initially without a language or a project but carried forward by the struggle against what it refuses, rediscovers itself once more as the historical enemy of the economy and the State. The demarcation line between these two conceptions never did achieve this degree of clarity in Portugal but it approached it near enough for all the resources of spectacular interference to be mobilized once it was seen to be the case. Thus the modern character of the Portuguese revolutionary movement was less evident in what it did itself than in the forces ranged against it.

One can measure on this occasion the progress accomplished in the production of non-consciousness since Rosa Luxemburg's day. Just prior to her assassination in the hands of social democracy, she found in this workers' representation turned against proletarian autonomy, the secret of the new conditions where the central question of the revolution could no longer be posed openly and honestly through open struggle. The primitive accumulation of the modern spectacle had expropriated the men of everykind of intervention in history and could now give them to contemplate the version it chose. The hidden international connection of the November 25th coup (the moderate officers had inherited the support which had initially been granted to Spínola) were made visible the more it became a question one could only see them. The universal collaboration of agents of information and of the monopoly of appearances (politicians, mass media experts) showed what lessons they had been able to draw from 1968. They broke records when it came to censorship and falsification. It reached such a pitch, that the profound movement of working class autonomy, scarcely appeared in

their reports. Instead, the initial backwardness of the Portuguese revolution, the armed leftism of the Captains, were exposed to better view. This Holy Alliance to be sure was not in itself anymore modern than the interests it served. However its methods, its procedures and its field of action, plainly are. They delimited - contrary to what a revolutionary movement must do in order to break out of its isolation and find allies. Spectacular information is not only in effect the old bourgeois deceit now technically equipped but is a necessary moment in the erection of a reality which escapes control and understanding - just as it does historical correction. Equally from this perspective one can comprehend how modern States chose, in so far as they are able, to avoid a bloody repression. They are in effect aware that it is necessary above all to obscure the line of demarcation which the social war traces, mask the reality of choice and possible intervention, and see to it that this confrontation is prevented between universal interests concerning the totality of social practice and breaking the screen image of a manipulated reality where the evidence of the facts themselves is always that of the fait accompli leading back to the old hierarchy. Thus the authorized commentators, delirious from their own falsehoods, were able to speak of the "surrealist" character of the Portuguese revolution. Its development had in fact become totally incomprehensible from the moment the hidden proletarian menace had determined the action of all the other protagonists.

But even in Portugal, the effect of the spectacle, whose dispossession renders strange to men their own history, let them still think in the words of power. So the fact they were already against it was concealed from themselves. This weighed heavily on the development of the workers' autonomous movement. Those who should have and could have combatted this backward consciousness - partisans of a program of total sub-

version - illustrated to the point of caricature the revolutionary failing of a contemplative identification with the proletariat. Absolute radicalism predicated on their powerlessness was supposed to save them from the bother of making their perspective triumphant. The assembly movement did nothing from the moment it was confronted with the necessity of inventing its own language in order to communicate what it had done and what it could do. It did nothing to aid its self defence against the ideological bombardment raining down from Stalinist falsification to leftist confusion. This shameful omission certainly affected the course of events. Though the subsequent course of events cannot be put down to it alone, it shows that direct coordination envisaged by the assemblies had been easily suffocated and neutralized. Thus the movement found itself more and more dependent on external organs of information, (Radio Renascenca and Republica) partially controlled by the workers and more vulnerable in every respect. The workers especially did not formulate accurately the practical problems that had appeared on the scene to confront the assembly movement and which confront all proletarian movements.

The inactive extremists let this movement be crushed allowing it to disappear without ever leaving behind it maximum general conclusions which a more conscious struggle could use.

Of course it isn't theories which make history. Proletarians don't attempt to overthrow a social organization because of them. They take it upon themselves to do it splendidly. No one person can take their place. But once individuals are launched on such an undertaking and they attempt to combat a particular ignominy, the fact of possessing a general historical conception, as long as it has been conceived with this end in view, can greatly ease access to an understanding of their own actions. And the time gained can be decisive in a situation where everything happens very quickly. Whatever the issue in a struggle, if the proletarian party has learnt to proclaim its ends proudly and the universal interests at stake, it will have gained a considerable victory over the organization of passivity and historical amnesia. If, on the contrary, it does not affirm clearly its autonomous perspective, it shall lose with the memory of what it has done, the consciousness of what was effectively possible.



The range of tasks of a modern proletarian movement appeared once more in Spain. The exhaustion of Francoism and the politics of a change revealed the depths of the social crises. The assembly movement became generalized between 1976 and 1978 in workers' strikes and marked the autonomous intervention of the proletariat in the war of succession opened by Franco's death. This movement rediscovered once more the best libertarian tradition of direct action in class struggle. However it did not come to know itself in knowing all its enemies. It is true it lacked the project of total emancipation and the organic experience which the libertarian movement had possessed to the very highest degree before the civil war. Instead it was less inclined to rhetoric, less anti-intellectual and harder to please vis the comrade leaders and "prestigious militants". It was in brief, for better or for worse, more modern: it was without ideology but also without language and a memory.

In the first instance, through its existence, the assembly movement gave the lie to all the liars, who speaking in the name of a proletariat reduced to silence, had already discounted its presumed submission in capitalist sectors interested in change. They saw well enough that Francoism had lost control of Spanish society and entered into discussion with workers only in their own places under a renewed form of management. Thus the facts speak for themselves, that representative democracy under its present form, is not an approximation to but the exact opposite of real democracy. Once people stop speaking directly about their own problems, in its place the political spectacle appears with its monopoly of speech. Its false construction proceeds from the destruction of the



practical environment of truth where all the problems of society are posed so they can be resolved. In Spain, contrary to Portugal, the proletariat did not profit due to an ill considered attempt at reform, from a weakening of the State. The party of modern counter revolution - residing in the State but ready to accept those who wanted to enter it - had without a doubt, learnt something from the misfortunes of its neighbour. It sacrificed what had to be sacrificed but nothing more and knew how to prevent its retreat changing into a rout, giving ground step by step until it reached the point where equilibrium was re-established once more - principally because of the dispersal of proletarian forces. However before this came about, from the beginning and against all comers, the assembly movement gave proof of a remarkable decision making spirit and determination. It found itself in opposition to the modernization of the State, precisely at the point when post university cadres looked to the development of the administrative, political and cultural State apparatus to create the jobs they hankered after. Given the weakness of private capital in Spain, they are more dependant on the State than elsewhere and proletarian struggles instantly excited the fierce hostility of this subaltern personell of social control. As per normal, the Stalinists found amongst them their most ardent partisans.

The offensive reached its highest point in Vitoria (Feb/March 1976). If the Madrid strikes in January had convinced the bosses of the need for unions which could control the workers, the general strike in Vitoria definitely did for the Stalinist project of a renewal of vertical unionism and exposed the embryonic pact between the

regime and the opposition. It was the end of the period of relative tolerance staged by the government to make its promises of reform credible. The workers of Vitoria were machine gunned down and the opposition were charged with the task of isolating their uprising. With the failure of Francoist reforms, henceforth the bourgeoisie, where it was not tied to the institutions of the dictatorship, had to resign itself to the legalisation of parties and trade unions. The opposition united to negotiate political reforms and a social contract which did away with the less presentable aspects of the Francoist heritage and prepared the ground for the elections.

No form of political management could, to be sure, really satisfy a movement which was a critique through practical acts of politics and all separated representations. But in order to unify their forces, they now had to unify their demands and sum them up in a simple slogan which could surpass scattered struggles. It was necessary to give them the form of a general objective for it to have a satisfactory outcome and one in which the mass of workers could recognise an essential need. For the assemblies to really struggle for themselves they had to fight against the opposition. All the lessons learnt through struggle had to be applied and the political/trade union bureaucracy treated as an enemy in the same manner as Francoism. "Either Assemblies or Unions" - such was the alternative posed by the most conscious

workers. Herein lay the tactical necessity concentrating a possible unification of a coherent revolutionary project within it. The need for self-organization was deeply felt and the trade unions were at first largely boycotted. However coordination in a lasting form hardly got past the local level. The absence of an organized assembler current expressing itself as such - one formulating a critique of trade unions which was in everyone's head - contributed to a dispersal and confusion settled in. The Autumn strikes of 1976 though tougher and more organized, ended up with the demonstration on November the 12th. Here rather than express their combative enthusiasm, the workers accepted the leadership of trade union bureaucracies. Thus the anti-Francoist demonstration became a demonstration of trade union discipline. About to be overcome, a backward consciousness would no longer make good. It had not learnt to make itself visible, rejected better and better by the organization of democratic appearances. The assembly movement had allowed this decisive moment to pass. A bold initiative could have completely upset the order of things, producing a condition henceforth changed by everyone because the revolutionary perspective became tangible, obliging each to do something in relation to it. This is not the place to analyse in detail the mechanism of the defeat which followed, nor analyse the main results. But it is necessary for us to note how the modern forces of counter revolution behave as one, which we had already seen at work in Portugal.





In fact people never throw themselves wholeheartedly into a movement that combats the existing social order out of a pure detestation of what exists. In one way or another they must possess a positive conception of the life they want to lead. The former workers' revolutionary movement had possessed it, especially the anarchist part of it. During the 1936 Spanish revolution it had rightly gone the farthest in liquidating the old order of things. Proletarians of course can acquire this positive conception through struggle itself - a community of interests in which the means prefigure the end. But it is still essential the practical qualities produced are transcribed into an autonomous language and unified into an historical project.

The varying success with which commodity propaganda and the State have kept us in a state of complacency during the 80's - a success which brings everything and everybody together in the deepening of separation and the superabundant equipping of passivity - has come about as the result of a more profound success. Strictly speaking it cannot say anything about, or even mention, the repression and eclipse of the project of a higher form of historical activity which constituted the latent content of the post '68 proletarian movements. Crystallizing a collective project unifying the revolutionary needs of the epoch has always been a long and exacting task. Today however, it is rendered all the more difficult because the theoretical or practical contributions to its formulation are constantly confronted with the unprecedented power of falsifications and distortion that class society has acquired. This is not merely a feature typical of normal periods where no problem is correctly posed and discussed socially. But when it happens and to that end needs a revolutionary movement, it succeeds in preventing an accurate assessment of

it or ensures that it is quickly forgotten.

The assembly movement in Spain genuinely resuming the desire for revolutionary emancipation which had been so marked in this country, had plainly posed the question of the historical liquidation of Francoism. It was obvious this liquidation could only be effective and irreversible with the abolition of class domination. The politicians, belonging to the opposition aspired to serve it and the State function they hoped to succeed to, for that purpose. Otherwise one would see once more one of those monstrous hybrids which spontaneously creates a system of oppression that only knows how to discourage critique by becoming always more unspeakable. This gamble passed scarcely noticed in Europe where, for close on 40 years, the false consciousness of the left had trodden hypocritically on Francoism, or more exactly on the convenient image of everything they did not combat in themselves. And in Spain itself, the truth which the assembly was witness to, did not succeed in imposing itself irreversibly enough to create the terrain from which to judge the world, which all those who combat it, must undertake. The democratic ersatz in power in Spain surely is a particularly gross repugnant lie with a King, a Francoist police force, a military and its Stalinists and socialists governing under the eye of the military like Primo de Rivera's ministers were. But according to the principle which governs the realities produced by the spectacular system in their entirety, it is not what one does in order to be believed that matters so much, as entirely occupying the terrain of social expression. And like any adulterated foods, it is accepted because of the lack of possible comparisons. Truth then becomes an extravagance and a scandal. A bitter pill to swallow, it must be spat out. The 50th anniversary of the 1936 revolution could be commemorated peace-

fully by all its reconciled conquerors. What was attempted then will, in future, have no meaning for the satisfied citizens of neo-democracy. In the same way, they are complete strangers to the qualities traditionally associated with Spanish people - pride, independence or, courage.

In order to break the monopoly of appearances from conferring weight on the authoritarian production of lies, it is not enough for the facts to accumulate each day that passes giving the lie to official truths. In addition to giving expression in society via all means one can lay hold of to a unified viewpoint and perspective of supercession, it is necessary to know how to drive home the truth of these facts and make the lies and cheeky sophisms appear for what they are. Facts do not speak for themselves - except in order to repeat the unvarying assumptions of submission - as long as people refuse to speak, without intermediaries, of their needs and aspirations. Their dialogue gives a new meaning to facts through the historical potential they find there. The new conception of a real life which had been the latent content of all modern revolutionary attempts, is now forced by the development itself of the ruling mechanisms of falsification and distortion to become palpable. This new conception is so completely repressed that what returns, in the barbarity of abundance, is no longer recognisable.

With the disappearance of the old workers' movement which was either crushed or integrated, proletarians have also lost the ideological definition of a project for the autonomous organization of society. This loss does not enable them to learn how to define such a project themselves when, without any illusion of an historical guarantee, having to construct it once more, they must always derive it from a recognition of the total meaning of their actions. This action is the sole truth they can possess which is really

theirs. And as it not a matter of a single short-lived action we can be left in a state of dissatisfaction. Lenin, with his model of a hierarchical party, entrusted with the memory of an accumulated experience had tried to find an answer to this. After May '68, the revolutionary movements in Portugal and Spain were important practical contributions to the construction of a project of emancipation capable of rallying to it, the immense majority of people by confronting each and everyone with the possibility of an immediate profound, personal change. Whatever was achieved by their struggles as regards irreversible general conclusions or, through the drawing of a boundary line with the enemy - above all with the Stalinists and the whole of the left wing political/union personell - with their defeat in isolation, a threshold and a limit to the revolutionary offensive begun in 1968 had been reached. The organization of an international revolutionary current did not take place. The vast and shapeless army of subversion which still shakes Europe does not have the knowledge of having, over the years, lost the initiative. For "two armies which fight against each other can be equally mauled. Victory in this case will come to whomever is the first to inform themselves on the state of their enemy". (Machiavelli)



Every time proletarian subversion develops, it certainly shows it is capable of disorganizing survival but not of organizing life. This weakness has been present from the start of the new epoch in 1968 but it had been generally ignored or minimized. The occupations' movement in France had begun to realize only one of the two tasks of proletarian revolution. And that was the active critique of all aspects of alienated life. The other, the re-organization of social life through the direct democracy of workers' assemblies had scarcely been envisaged and then only by a handful of people. Hence the May movement did not bequeath to the revolutionary epoch it had inaugurated, new practical principles adequate to developing the needs and richest desires that surpassed all permitted satisfactions. Instead it only bequeathed the memory of a total refusal that was less and less readily practicable. That appeared to be enough however because what had just upset the established order was still there in the hearts and minds of so many people. It was thought that the fight would soon return to where it had left off. But the more time passed, the more difficult it appeared to be to grasp the occasion that had once seemed so near. The taste for critique was lost because its use lost its flavour and what had been intensely lived retreated into a depressing representation. In the absence of a perspective of supercession, what was even more depressing, was the fact that the spreading shock waves of refusal and the extension of contestation to all aspects of life had, as their main effect the modernization of false consciousness and the roles allotted by commodity consumption. Acceptance was in short adulterated and refined. A moment of life had grown old and it couldn't be rejuvenated by the motley colours of spectacular recuperation.

What had initially been lacking in the



new revolutionary movement was not subsequently conquered during later revolutionary attempts. Their real defeat is due less to them having ended, than not having left behind what could have served to breathe new passion for a program of total subversion, by specifying the qualitative means which contain the end because they are already exemplars of a freer utilization of life. A power menacing enough to exasperate its enemies must guard against wearying its supporters. The principal failure of a movement of social critique characterized by a scorn for work as practised by many proletarians lay, in not being convinced through its acts, of its capacity to organize life along other lines. So it did not know how to concretely demonstrate to other workers what they had to gain by ceasing to be workers. Certainly in order to possess the consciousness of the possibilities of changing life, one had already to be radically refusing the existing organization. But in order to practise this refusal, it was necessary to be able already to gain support from the consciousness of the possibility of another kind of life. What in reality destroys this wholly formal circularity was the movement of supercession itself. Revolutionary practise " that grasps that changing circumstances and human activity or auto-change " is at once a practical critical activity and produces the positive values which are its foundation. It is this tension between apparently contradictory demands which can produce the qualitative force, the rationality but the poetry also, of an activity which must make plain to everyone the existence of the material basis in society of a much richer life.

In its objective crises, the supercession of the commodity economy as well as in the universal form of its social relation as in the appropriation of

nature, was definitely on the agenda. It did not subjectively become however in the practise of the revolutionary movement a positive perspective. The aspirations which were expressed through the refusal of work (through strikes, sabotage etc) did not come in themselves to admit of their subversive truth, nor of the problems in general facing society. The false reference terms preventing a solution were left intact, thus remaining imprisoned on the terrain of economic blackmail victims of the confusion they gave rise to. If the question of putting life to a new use is not violently posed by the workers, the appropriation of the workers by the existing organization of life is there to regress it. Hence the famous " economic crises " which is made so much use of, should more profoundly be understood as a moment in the social war when the basis of economic laws are spirited away: " the unconsciousness of those involved ". It is the means through which the forces of unconsciousness including those revolving in workers' heads have sought after perpetuating this world. It is also in terms of a neurotic repetition of a previous illness, intended to conjure away present uncertainties and the likelihoods and risks of an unknown reality.

This resistance of a social unconsciousness applies above all of course to the ruling class and all the managers of unconsciousness. The moment society discovers through a struggle against commodity abundance emancipated from human need, that the economy depends on it, then it becomes a matter of persuading it once more that it depends on the economy. It is the reason why all bosses have become Marxists. Where the ego, the subject of history, emerges to freely judge its own actions it is necessary to restore the power of the economic id. The intelligence the managers of the economy may possess of this necessity, was inscribed in the frame

work of the spontaneous development caused by the fundamental tendency of capitalism to make dead labour dominate living labour to an ever greater degree. This materialization of the autonomized economy when it reaches a certain level becomes the object of a bureaucratic management which programs its development. In this form of management one can see, through the contradictions and hazards of local politics, the tendential fusing of managerial bureaucracy and State bureaucracy into a corporate body of varying proportions. The person that best corresponds to it as the " ideal type " remains the technocratic Nazi, Albert Speer. It is not that the bourgeoisie cannot any longer exhibit the slightest independence in relationship to the State but that they have no reason to do so. Commodity reason has become an integral part of the reasons of the State.

For all its disastrous failures and catastrophic results, this form of bureaucratic management has succeeded at least from the point of view that it continues to constantly reproduce and expand the material conditions of its domination. It dispenses with all strategic calculation, pleased to follow its natural bent for ever more extending the boundaries of the desertification of life which is its real reason for existing. The system of commodity reproduction faced with modern proletarian subversion had evinced its fragility in the initial struggles for a generalized historical life. Also when faced with an "energy crises " which was only one particular consequence of its aberrant management of natural resources, it had responded by accelerating the concrete construction of its independent kingdom. And consequently the proletarianization of real life. Capital is no longer the invisible Weltgeist which pushes peoples with irresistible force towards what they don't know or want. In the practical life of each indiv-



idual it lies directly in the incredible autonomy of all material conditions which "crushes individuality through contingency".

Nuclearization and the information revolution are at this moment in time, the two most obvious aspects of a determined technical development which embraces an alienated production which has strictly become the production of alienation. In both cases one sees re-created artificially the equivalent of natural conditions rising from the need for irrigation which favoured the birth and development of oriental despotisms. What now irrigates this desertified society and is the material foundation of the power of the specialists, of monopolistic survival is, the circulation of energy and information. Both are complimentary preconditions to the use of human labour in its last historical form. And this sick society has to admit that it can only survive like this subjected to a machinery which causes the heart of a world without a heart, to beat. It is in every way similar to the results of modern medicine, thanks to which, the human organism is no longer itself only one artificial organ among many. Because it is not society which has broken free from the economy, it is the economy which has broken free from society.

In the accomplishment of this process commodity reification remains true to its concept. Definitively expelling living activity, reducing it to simply gazing on the circulation of commodity reification, it had first of all to take the form of a thorough going reorganization of industrial labour. Automation is introduced and the human energies set at liberty are progressively neutralized by planning the absence of any utilization of this freedom. The destruction of the workers' environment, that is, of the former practical bases for an autonomous proletarian affirmation had been for 20 years the Delenda

Carthago of all innovative discourses on technocratic capitalism. And though it had been affirmed ideologically and openly (as the end of the proletariat and class struggle) it nonetheless corresponded for capitalist domination to a real necessity. This had its idyllic version in the mythology of integration. By ceaselessly revolutionizing the instruments of production and consequently the relations of production and social conditions in their entirety, capitalism continues to exist. But when it bureaucratizes itself, it tries to program this ceaseless upsetting and plan, with the aid of unions and all the agencies of social control, the threshold of tolerance. One is obliged to note that for the time being, it has succeeded in Western Europe in actively breaking up the working class milieu. Split and demoralized, the workers have not reappropriated the revolutionary autonomous tradition (the organization of Councils) which would have proved exemplary to all other workers and the entire proletariat. Hence the time lost by the revolution has allowed capital to continue reorganizing social labour in its entirety, a function of the imperatives of its domination. All advance in social alienation stems from this fact.

Workers' revolts in the 60's were basically the result of the admission into the factories of the young generation of workers devoid of any "trade patriotism" and responding to the deskilling of labour. In their resistance to exploitation and the modern refusal of wage slavery, they tried to unite the traditional demands of the working class. The relationships of force (the weakening of unions etc) impeded for awhile the pursuit of capitalist rationalization but when these struggles declined it resumed its course. One of its major features is the transfer of important sectors of industrial production far away from Europe, cradle of the workers' movement. They are exported to places where

bureaucratic or dictatorial regimes hand over to be exploited, enormous layers of a labour force without a tradition of struggle, nor a historical consciousness. Another is the institutionalizing of turnover practised by young workers. Here the precariousness of submitting to an employer is to some degree inverted by submitting to the precariousness of employment. It is pointless to enter into the details here of an evolution in which the main result has been, as far as concerns the relationship of force in the social war, the way in which unemployment serves to undermine the basis of workers' revolts. Above all, it undermines the threatening consciousness of the crises of the economy as the crises of life for all concerned. Under the pressure of the survival crises imposed on workers this consciousness is censured.

The main effect exerted by the pressure of unemployment has been to break forever the alliance which had been ephemerally established, in the most combative moments of proletarian subversion, between traditional working class sectors more in the grip generally of union bureaucracies and Stalinist ideologies and younger or less disciplined workers giving expression to a modern revolt. The action embarked on by the dominant separation (whether socio-professional, racial or having something to do with age division) cannot be accounted for by a unilateral explanation of the non crystallization of a unified project, it is rather one of its main manifestations. Only the consciousness of a common perspective surpassing separation practically in order to attack the world in its totality which means the waged which constitutes its basis, could prevent those who still have a job from defending it under union control. It could also prevent those who do not have one from falling through a disastrous ideological evasion into all the illusions of marginality which is imposed on them more often

than chosen by them. Even when they have chosen it, being a safety valve it never puts the system in danger. These illusions which go from the alienated use of drugs to diffuse terrorism, not to mention all the attempts at constructing a mode of life on the basis of poverty will finally destroy the consciousness of a generation in revolt which was 20 years old at the end of the 60's. Thus in the factories those who found the means of struggle wanted to engage in struggle, only found alienated means there. The ones who didn't know how to defend themselves were crushed like the others who did not know how to attack.

This conclusion stated like this takes on the aspect of a diagrammatic report because it is a question in fact of a general tendency, the awareness of which is unevenly distributed throughout Europe. But what has already been victorious is the main tendency. One has observed in the space-time of society the contradictions, concretely deployed, of an epoch. The attempt to construct the project of a changed life had been outrun as the world changed bringing about the autonomous movement of the economy and the States, which serve it. This epoch is now drawing to a close. The changing of the objective conditions, the transmutation of each particular thing into a commodity - the systems particular talent thanks to which it ameliorates the bad by producing something worse - has brought about such monstrous results that everyone in their own lives, concerning the simplest things, are led to express an opinion on what exists and no longer on what could exist.

The last chance to affirm a perspective of revolutionary change in Western Europe was played out in Italy. It possessed enough strength to thwart the opposite perspective of change belonging to the ruling class. What was



at stake during this initial period of modern proletarian revolution was apparent in a particularly clear manner. All the problems we have just enumerated were concretely posed by a subversive proletarian movement that was longer and more profound than any that had previously existed elsewhere. Born in 1968 and briefly interrupted by the police bombs in 1969, this movement continued to grow over the following years. No domain of everyday life was spared its practical critique. It was eventually crushed and this was largely due to the contrived measure of terrorism. But one must not overestimate the role of contrived measures in a conflict. Their only lasting influence is upon the conquered.

In the mid 70's, the Italian State which had never been upright and strong was weakened and corrupted again by the murderous expedients contrived by the secret service after the successful outcome to the bombs in Milan. Bombs had gone off in Italicus in 1970 and in Brescia and Bologna in 1974, (these explosions were conveniently put down to neo-fascists because neo-fascists were in the secret service) - demonstrating how and with what the State still claimed to dominate Italian society. Fortunately, as far as itself was concerned, it had struggled against the subversive party of radical workers, not only with the aid of its provocateurs but also and more effectively, with the staunch aid of the Stalinists. They were ready, in this

bloody period of history, to compromise without any hesitation, making themselves each time accomplices of the official lie. Trying really to gain some governmental benefit, they became what they had come to combat on their own score, a movement which largely escaped their control. The vast formless party of subversion with a strong presence in the factories, rich in experience of struggle and social hatred were stirred to revolt against the first attempts at capitalist restructuring, thus limiting the possibilities of trade union recuperation. It was magnified in the streets by all those who had already marginalized unemployment and repression through absenteeism and worker indiscipline. Advancing towards its radical means, through the rhythm of its practical consciousness, the dangers of a split in society, unfavourable to the partisans of power, hovered before them. Exacting gains from them were made to look contemptible rather than fearful.

In a pre-revolutionary offensive such as this, anything that parts company with the social movement to practise armed violence in a secret hierarchy, hastens the moment when the creation of antagonistic parties comes to a stop. It is no longer a question of one party destroying the other. As for itself, the State has an interest in provoking violent struggle as quickly as possible because it already disposes all its forces, whilst those belonging to its adversary, can only increase. Leninist backwardness, which had not been suffic-

iently denounced and combatted, promoted the emergence of a terrorism that could easily be infiltrated and manipulated. It opportunely permitted the State to probe the capacity of its enemy to respond and prepare the counter-revolution.

The last chance of escaping from this trap was offered in 1977. The irreconcilable oppositions of the rebels who had brought about 10 years of social struggle was openly manifest. The Stalinists as the most abject supporters of a repugnant society were, this time, dealt with in a fitting way. This movement granted to all Italian workers the possibility of making a decisive choice. They could have ceased to be merely bad workers. But after a moments hesitation they drew back. It was upto them alone through a general strike putting violence to good use, to open up the terrain of revolutionary action by a lasting break with the daily reproduction of stupifying wage labour and through the creation of conditions for dialogue where everything could be discussed. Also the most unrealistic and desperate element of the movement was to be found totally exposed in the street. It was easy enough for the State to give chase but it was now necessary for the State to have done once and for all with agitation. It did this with its customary means - Stalinism and terrorism. In the failure of the movement and the disarray that followed, they found the conditions of their success.

In February 1978, the unions, condemning strikes and absenteeism, pledged themselves to reconciling the workers to work. A pretext was necessary outside the factories to stamp out subversion everywhere, thus supplying the Stalinists with the justification which would allow them to fulfill their role as informers. This was provided in March by the kidnapping and execution of Moro by the Red Brigades. The execution of Moro was certainly done at the instigation of a fraction of the State which could appear, when it came to making the Stalinists do what it wished and nothing more, as subsequently the most clear sighted. But it wasn't only this fraction they served - it was the power of the State as such and none

of its supporters are deceived about this. In the spectacle of a possible civil war, it profitted from this new bid by reducing the entire population to a state of public disgust, sceptism and above all, compliance with a history that escaped them. From this angle, the question of the actual degree of manipulation of a group like the Red Brigades, loses its interest. Its action, whatever is the part played by fanatical arch-Stalinists and the part played by agents infiltrated by the State, is completely counter-revolutionary. At another level entirely the deepest, most real manipulation, is effected by the control of all the information media. Thanks to this, the only explanation of reality that appears, is the one authorized by the State. The manipulation of the representation of reality contains however, as one of its necessary moments, the manipulation of reality itself. In this respect, the number of " repentants " from the formidable Brigadistas, suffices to provide a notion of the security that exists in their organization. They could end up, when they stop retreating into the bosom of the church, as technical advisors on a film about the Moro affair. Beyond a doubt, this won't permit them to render more convincingly, what in reality looked already like a bad film.

The State to be sure has not succeeded with terrorism in luring the population into supporting it positively. But it has at least procured its neutrality in the brutal struggle against subversion which was its real aim. And that has satisfied it broadly speaking. At the cost of a few hundred killed (the bomb in Bologna raising the spectacle of horror once more, came along at a timely moment) and several thousand political prisoners (arrests began during the Moro affair and continued throughout the following four years) the State has not only crushed the offensive which threatened it but has equally paralysed the capacity of workers to resist, clearing the obstacles to a long awaited economic restructuring. As Moro said when he was kidnapped: " Public opinion will in time understand ". However for the spec-

tacle, it is right to say of all the truth, "When its time has passed". With out endangering itself, reigning no less surely as an eternal present, it can surely identify with a rewriting of history. In Italy henceforth everything there is to know about the P2, the Mafia, the Vatican or the secret service, is known. But this truth is useless because the only force which could grasp it and make it a practical truth and meet the requirements of the essential has been defeated.

The Italian laboratory of counter-revolution has experimentally demonstrated the vast field of application under modern capitalism that exist for the kind of State lies brought to bear in Stalinist Russia. They are that much more effective here because they are not the product of police terror but of commodity and information abundance. There no longer exists today anything which resembles democratic public opinion. The Italian State has irrefutably proved that, accumulating enough corrupt, extortionate practises to cause the least exacting of its citizens to grow weary of bourgeois democracy. This has provoked an electoral collapse of all the parties involved i.e. every party. To come out with such a hypothesis, is to shed light on the impunity enjoyed by the bosses and is enough to show what little reality there is in the latitude open to the arbitrary power of the State through the decomposition of any political discrimination and all political debate. The lesson has not been lost. It was noticeable afterwards that all States outdid each other in reminding their subjects how carrying out their duties had been simplified by modern democracy, relieving them from the anxiety of having to pronounce on what maybe important.

In the course of this Stalinization of the world one has witnessed in addition the shameful abdication of intellectuals before the totalitarian development of the lie of unilateral communication. In a truly Orwellian fashion, it is



their denunciation of an unreal Stalinist totalitarianism which has been the ideological expression of their contribution to real Stalinization. Tracking down the germs of the totalitarian plague in the most unexpected historical crannies was a heroic struggle. Not one thing, or person, was overlooked and our anti-Stalinist doctors proved that all revolutionary thought or activity (and perhaps simply even all thought and historical activity) harboured a totalitarianism a la Gulag and the GPU as its necessary consequence. Plato, St Just, Bakunin: everyone fitted the bill. The identification of the revolution with terrorism and therefore with Stalinism was the immovable base of their syllogism. In a sense it's possible to say they never compromise themselves with the revolution because they never expressed in public the least doubt as to the origin of terrorism.

What is expressed in this type of automatic writing of spectacular inversion is the simple fact that Stalinism - including its several exotic varieties - is completely unable to appear any longer as the revolutionary model, or even a rival to the western system of exploitation. At a prosaic sociological level one can rest content in noting the promotion of a new generation of servile intellectuals in the recycling of their arrivisme after the failure of leftism. However, ideological renewal in spectacular culture enlists auxiliaries to deceive people who, having broken with the image of revolution, expect to get rid of their bad conscience. This regained assurance, profoundly indicates that Stalinism where it is not the master of society, has ceased to carry out its counter-revolutionary mission this century when it helped defeat the first attempts at autonomous affirmation of the modern proletariat.

In every country where the capitalist

transformation of the productive apparatus and above all, of the greatest productive force of all, the proletariat, is already underway, the working class representation which had its model and ideology in Stalinism, only represent a rejected labour force. And though it must defend, in order to save its social base, industrial sectors that have been condemned, it can never go so far as to combat the economic rationality that presides over it. As for the workers themselves which capital puts into liquidation alongside the factories, it seems an impossibility they will ever now organize a practical critique, open up new perspectives, while their desperate actions are more isolated than ever. Their only chance lies in linking up autonomously with the reserve army of the revolution, the unemployed and with workers belonging to the modernised sectors. However the theoretical and practical base for such a unification is cruelly lacking today.

The destruction of the workers' milieu in countries where the most modern conditions of capitalism reigns obviously does not signify the disappearance of the proletariat. The expropriation of life exists and so



The Stalinist bureaucracies associated with the management of the first phase of modern capitalism have, as a result, combatted autonomy to the very end. As usually happens in these cases it is their turn to be broken. By a ruse of history - in itself a particularly significant example of the contradiction that work their way through the world of the commodity - it is in places where the bureaucratic class is in power as the mouth piece of the planetary power of capital, that workers' autonomy continues to be active and safeguards its own interests. For the new contestation in process of being constructed in the West, programmed by anti-historical production, it is the living evocation of a past it has to

does class struggle. The system of falsification proceeds with this concrete aspect of the critique of the economy (the proletariat) quite simply as it does with the other (pollution): not being able to get rid of it, tries to mask it, looks for ways of making it invisible primarily to itself. In this process the proletariat loses certain illusions but acquires others. The revolutionary critique of despair belongs to all workers when it tries to give an hierarchical illusion of promotion when, in moving on from a machine tool to a visual display unit (that's to say more oftener still, when they are directly placed in conditions of slavery to the machines of the independent economy) where, in front of these screens, they lose the activity of work as they do the enjoyment of liesure. For these wage earners are really proletarians who exercise no power over the programming of their lives, even if they don't know it as yet. People are more radically lost to themselves there than ever before. But they can always acquire the theoretical consciousness of their loss.

realize. In the same way it can only comprehend its scope and total consciousness by appropriating the critique of the economy this side of what upto now, has come to a standstill.

During the summer of 1980, the Polish workers began their revolution - some thing which could only be complete with the definitive destruction of bureaucratic power. They are the first in the history of countries subjected to totalitarian domination, to have succeeded in organizing autonomous means of communication and clarification of their endeavour without being crushed in isolation. And they established in Polish society a lasting dividing line between the monologue of State lies and the partisans of truth

via social dialogue. Faced with the military power of their old Russian invader they were unarmed as never before. As always they were ringed by hostile European States united in support of the status quo. And more than any Polish insurrection in the last century, they were isolated from proletarians in other countries. Yet the revolution of 1980/'81 represents the highest point attained by proletarian subversion in the present epoch in the choice of its means. As a consequence it came the closest to succeeding. Because of the scandal of its existence for 16 months, it finished up revealing the truth of bureaucratic usurpation and the fragility of a system of oppression where arbitrary power has to be gauged by the submissiveness of those it is held to represent. But the loveliest part of the Polish proletariats victory lay, in restoring to us again, the youth of the revolutionary project of a classless society by putting into practise its historical memory, that it had never completely lost since 1956. Nothing is ever settled and the outcome of this world is always open to question.

The magnificent chain reaction of the August strikes of 1980 took control so effectively, that in a few months, the entire society rose against its bureaucratic representation. The freedom to discuss everything that merited discussion was the minimum program of this social movement. What made the Polish revolution a modern revolution was this explicit program which placed at its center, the demand for truth. And by endowing itself with the means to realize it - the organization of Solidarity delegates - it showed it was the inheritor of all past proletarian revolutions. For better or worse, Solidarity was really the organization of a society in a state of revolution as the CNT had been in Spain in 1936. And whatever criticisms one can make of this organization, it is necessary to make them of the proletariat that created it and not the other way round.

In this revolution that they led themselves, the workers had to reinvent everything from nothing. At the outset they knew only one enemy - the Stalinist bureaucracy. But in the course of struggle they had to learn who all their false friends were. The astonishing thing is not the fact they were able to put a stop from within to the Polish revolution's advance, but that in spite of everything, it managed to get so far. To be sure, the Church right upto the end had been accepted as protector of the movements unity. From this position it was able to support directly or, through the intermediary role of its "experts", the reformist or rather, defeatist tendency in Solidarity. To be sure, though the August victory of 1980 had created entirely new conditions, oppositional intellectuals regrouped since 1976 in KOR, continued to defend a completely unrealistic perspective of compromise. All this was however the subject of a permanent debate within Solidarity where many delegates took a more realistic and more radical stance. And proletarians can only draw their historical intelligence from this direct experience of a struggle which confronts them each time with the consequence of their own choice.

At the beginning of 1981, bureaucratic power having renounced military intervention and no longer able to gain time through new concessions, decided to test the level of the relationships of forces - hence the Bydgoszcz Provocation. In response the workers actively set about preparing an indefinite general strike fixed for March 31st. But Lech Walesa succeeded at the last minute in getting it called off. The worst thing was not backing down but the way it had been put paid to through secret negotiations and the abuse of power typical of a delegate acting without a mandate. It wasn't so much that the workers had lost the initiative in the struggle against the bureaucracy - they could always regain it - but that they had lost it within their own organization. Like all moderates, whom embody the first flush of euphoric

unity in a revolution, Walesa had been a temporary blessing - an unavoidable evil. As time passes they are got rid of. On March the 30th, 1981 the moment had arrived. The revolutionary workers failed to recognise it when they permitted the democratic rules they had bestowed upon themselves to be swept aside. Delegating a portion of their power to uncontrolled authority, led as a consequence, to separate interests and politics which later on blurred the demands of struggle.

Everything continued on its way. In Autumn "social committees" all over Poland took over production and distribution, establishing against the bureaucracy a new legality. And delegates from Lodz had given notice that on December the 1st all workers in the region would be coming out on strike and were actively organizing a workers' guard for their self defence. This decision brought about a test of strength and the temporary settlement of December the 13th. Bureaucratic order was restored at the least possible cost. The confusion and dissaray fostered by the shilly shallying of the greater part of those responsible in Solidarity had meant Jaruzelski's pronouncement was not immediately countered except minimally as regards all it had to once more conquer. The workers chose the path of passive resistance. But through their organization and their clandestine publications, they subsequently continued to advance in the consciousness of their unchanged historical task. Henceforth the outcome of the Polish revolution depends more than ever, on what the Russian proletariat does. However, what the Polish workers have already done, also constitutes the most important contribution to the construction of a generalized anti-bureaucratic movement.

As for France where internationalism is much easier to practise for all that, the Polish revolution has been for those who look to the modern revolution and the ideas through which it began to announce its aims, the moment of truth. For the most part, they have used these ideas

only as a means of judging the Polish revolution and not in order to attempt to come to its aid. Whatever the case, they have been reduced to parrying the blows, unable to break the spectacular mechanism - which is pretty well established today of manipulating reality as a stimulus. So events are contemplated with anger, enthusiasm, indignation - it matters little - always however as something exterior. This dependence vis-a-vis spectacular mediations has reached a type of perfection. When silence and forgetfulness had taken the place of a conspiracy of noise, one could see there had been, once more, no cumulative process. Solidarity with the Polish revolution had not produced a durable dividing line or any area of agreement whatsoever from which to launch an anti-bureaucratic regrouping.

The possible juncture between past workers' struggle (the exemplary foreshadowing of autonomous methods of proletarian revolution) and the new revolt born spontaneously from the soil of the society of the spectacle (the critique of work, the commodity and all alienated life) which ceases to be envisaged and expected as an inevitable result of the objective processes of dominant conditions came close to happening momentarily in some of the developed countries. As the era and the chance it contained passed, the task of the new era faded from memory and consciousness. The world division of repressive labour used everything it had to block this desire and possibility. When the force of practical unification "The real movement abolishing existing conditions" disappears from social life, then the need for a critical unified theory appears once more.

The present organization of confusion, amnesia and ignorance through a bombardment of information has managed to prevent a revolt commenced in youth from becoming a cumulative or even a cyclical phenomena. Adults today when they are not

suicides or wrecked by madness or drugs are generally resigned. And as for those who aren't yet adults - if it's possible in a society of prolonged infantilism, to grow up to be that - they are in their overwhelming majority satisfied by the modes of expression of programmed dissatisfaction. Moreover - and for the enemy this marks an even greater success which determines and caps the former - the intensified penetration of commodity production is in the process of decomposing everything in a person's life which could serve as a basis from which to relaunch a practical critique. Language, behaviour, urban environment, memory, everything which in the clandestinity of the lived everyday was like a rear base of revolution, is caught in the cross fire of destruction and recuperation.

At the same stroke however, commodity rationality is becoming totalitarian and therefore always more visibly practical unreason, inexorably founders in the horrors of its unchecked consequences. Those who having left the factories and culture behind had fought against commodity rationality when it was in a better shape, now find themselves once more in this moment of universal history where the perspective of social revolution has returned, as the measure of all things to the center of the world. And those likewise who managed to get their foot in at the door of the palace which had long been shut and will never forget it, the ten years which have elapsed since the Portuguese revolution seemed to herald the extension to all Europe of the subversion of '68, shall only be the price of a conflict they had chosen. But even worse is the price those who did not chose it are paying.

It rests with France where the new youth of revolt was born to carry into effect the most explicit negation. Mitterandism hailed as the "victory of '68" is really a victory for the most modern form of counter-revolution which had let Gaullism in '68 do the job it

was not yet capable of carrying out itself. In 1984 a recuperator as advanced as Attili is Mitterand's hired thinker, a former leftist like July directs the officious journal of the technological left while a former ragbag of Maoist confusionism like Castro is charged with humanizing the plague of the urban estates. In 1984, the "situs" are everywhere but they are computers giving out information on the state of the traffic situation in a Paris which is destroyed. Hence they are putting a program into effect the exact opposite of a drift which had fired others towards reconstructing a new world. In 1984, the assassination of Gerard Lebovici, the publisher amongst others of George Orwell and false denunciation launched on this occasion against Guy Debord showed the liquidation of social critique is the order of the day. It will eventually get around to its few open partisans. As in nutritional or environmental matters it boils down to suppressing all points of comparison. The restored monopoly of social expression then need no longer fear the reactivation of what had once given it a hammering.

On this issue as on all others, the enemy where it has carried out its program, negatively shows us what we must do if we are to defend the chance of a free life and thought. We have attempted to write the history of the past years not to throw off the past but in order to rescue the possibility that was contained in it. Today many individuals who recognise themselves in this possibility are without denying themselves in a "labyrinth of trouble and grief whose detours are prolonged indefinitely by an unfinished revolution held in abeyance". There are times in order to get out of this labyrinth it is possible to go through walls, and others where the walls prove too thick. When this happens, memory must engage again the tendency of the times and connect with the view from the hub. From here it is possible to see the



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way out.

Beyond this begins the reconquest of the power of critical judgement which responds to all the noteworthy facts regarding the enslavement of life. A split in society, the preliminary to a revolution is brought about over the historical question par excellence, the question of progress. We are without a doubt surprizingly incapable of establishing the factual truth concerning all aspects of a production which escapes us really because it escapes from us. In order that we do not feel constrained by excessive scruples those who possess the neces-

ary abilities shall adequately demonstrate what they were made to serve. Through methodical research we are counting on restoring to the world a factual truth which is totally scandalous today. There is not one detail of material production which could give a lie to that. Disguise it and the consequences will lack all control. Given every thing that has gone before, you will appreciate we are against taking modesty to lengths that belittle our undertaking.

(roughly translated)

Summer 1986.

